The beginning of the total eclipse of the moon on Feb. 9 looked like this at 10:10 PM (PST) to persons awaiting the arrival of the northbound San Joaquin Daylight at the Berkeley station. When it arrived at 10:40 it proved to be the same train that had left at 8:39 that morning. See page 3 for the full story behind the incident.

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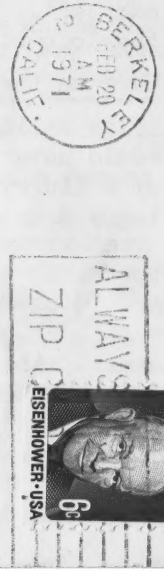
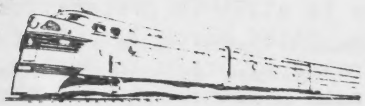


RAIL TRAVEL NEWSLETTER



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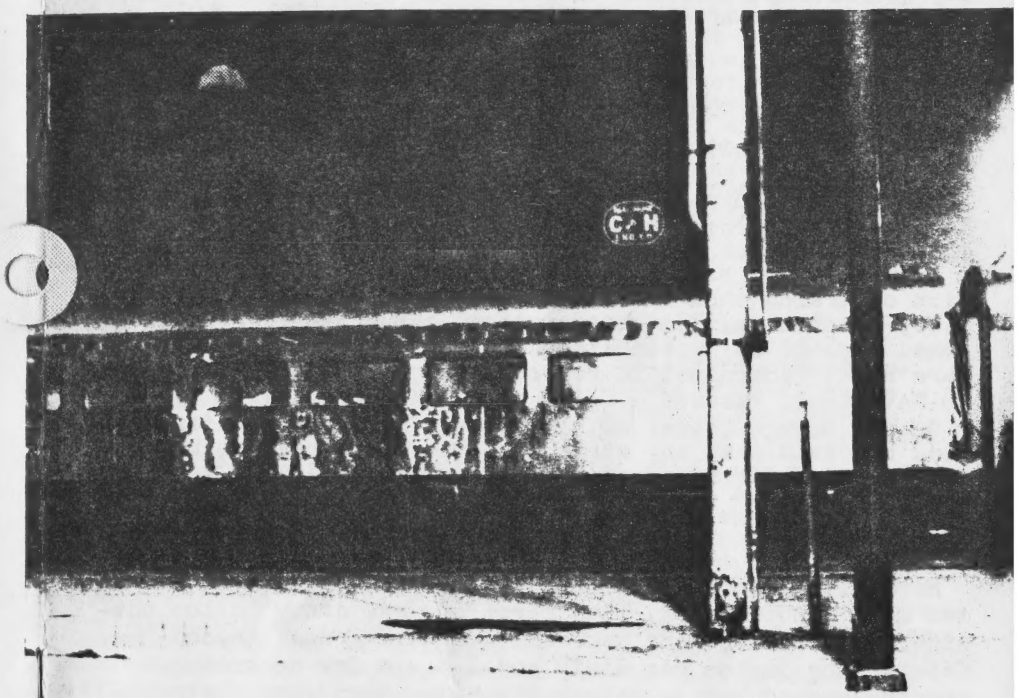

THE DAY OF THE EARTHQUAKE, THE TOTAL ECLIPSE, AND THE RETURN OF THE "DAYLIGHT" BY MOONLIGHT

See page 3

THE CHRONOLOGY OF 1970 RAILROAD EVENTS promised for this issue is still in preparation and will appear in the next issue, dated March 1. Other upcoming features include How to Travel by Train in Mexico, Yosemite by Train, more on railroad advertising, and the latest information about the changes in rail travel brought about by Railpax.

LETTERS

I believe that it is time that more fans in the East paid their patronage to Norfolk & Western's trains 3 and 4, the Pocahontas. As her newspaper and television ads beginning in June 1969 boasted, her cars and services were totally revived at the loss of the Arrow and she is the finest train serving Cincinnati. At only $9.35 on top of coach fare you may get a cozy roomette, free dinner, route brochures, and a vista-dome view of the Appalachians.

M. James Replogle
325 Hillhaven Drive
West Carrollton, Ohio 45449

(Mr. Replogle will send info on this train to correspondents.)

Atty. Gen. Louis J. Lefkowitz of New York State is preparing legislation to create an Intercity Transportation Authority to operate trains between N.Y., Albany & Buffalo; N.Y., Albany & Montreal; and N.Y. & Chatham. He also proposed state operation of trains thru the southern tier of the state between N.Y., Binghamton, Elmira, Jamestown & Buffalo (service abandoned Jan. 1970); restoration of service from Buffalo to Niagara Falls (abandoned 12 years); and reinstatement of service to Watertown, Massena & Ogdensburg (abandoned early 1964).

George McHugh, chief of the State R.R. Bureau, endorsed the plan but said that any state takeover would have to be done in degrees to avoid placing a "financial burden on the state."

Peter Goetz
Rome, New York

Recently I was in Pittsburg, Calif., and I stopped at the two main depots there. The first one was dirty on the outside; debris and waste were all over the ground around the depot. The inside was dirty and I saw a few cockroaches roaming around. It's things like this that give the railroads bad names. I surely wish I knew of a way to get these things cleaned up!!

R. N. Clugston
Fresno, California

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The Los Angeles Earthquake and the Trains

They say strange things happen at the full moon. Old-time Californians have a folklore about "earthquake weather." Did the conjunction of these events on Feb. 9 create the disastrous earthquake north of L.A. at 6:00 AM that killed 64 people and injured hundreds? Is it wild to believe in a connection among the movements of the moon, the earth's crust and the San Joaquin Daylight train that fateful day?

It was 21 hours before the full moon, 3 astronauts were traveling towards earth from that celestial body, and a total eclipse of the lunar light was due that evening. Exactly an hour before the scheduled departure of the Daylight from L.A.'s attractive Union Station, the temblor struck with destructive effects upon life and property that have been well chronicled. What happened to the trains that day?

Interstate 5 is the heavily traveled San Joaquin Valley route across the Tehachapis between Northern and Southern California. Fortunately, little traffic was moving on it and the several freeways that branch out from it between Newhall and San Fernando about 25 miles NW of downtown L.A., because a massive freeway interchange under construction collapsed, other highway bridges fell, and pavement buckled and cracked. Two people in a pickup truck were killed by a falling overpass, and four freeways were closed, 3 of them over a week. The destruction wreaked upon Interstate 5 was shared by near-by S.P. tracks that were blocked when the interchange fell. Elsewhere tracks were bent and moved laterally by the quake. The San Joaquin Daylight did not leave L.A. that day.

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THE COVER PHOTOGRAPH

A photo montage shows the appearance of the partially eclipsed moon as the San Joaquin Daylight arrived in Berkeley at 10:40 PM Feb. 9. This 20-second time exposure, which reproduces poorly, is looking west, while the moon (upper left) was actually nearly overhead.

.....

The southbound train left Oakland as usual and made its way as far as Bakersfield, near the southern end of the valley, beyond which the Tehachapis rear up. Unable to proceed farther, train 51 turned tail and sped back to Oakland. Train 52 normally reaches Oakland at 6:35. On Feb. 9 the returning Daylight arrived at 11:04, precisely as the earth's shadow blotted out the sun's light upon the lunar orb. It was a cloudless night, and perfect earthquake weather. William Kaufmann, director of Griffith Park Observatory in L.A., said the alignment of the sun, moon and earth that produced the eclipse may have triggered the quake. When the 3 bodies lie in a straight line there is maximum gravitational tension upon the earth's crust.

These strange happenings must have frightened the Daylight, because it hasn't poked its blunt nose out of the yards since that eerie night, and the populous San Joaquin Valley is without rail service, except for the mostly after-dark runs of the San Francisco Chief. (Coastal travelers can still ride the Coast Daylight, as its route and the nearly parallel highway 101 were unaffected; however, it makes no connection with the San Diegans heading south from Los Angeles.)

A TOTAL RAILROAD STRIKE on March 1 may yet be averted. The Railway and Airline Clerks, the nation's largest rail union, reached agreement Feb. 14, leaving only one union still bargaining. The United Transportation Union has yet no agreement but is now reportedly under pressure to reach a settlement. Congress had postponed a strike until Mar.1, and 2 other unions reached settlements Feb.4. Meanwhile, the Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen have scheduled a nationwide strike for 6AM March 5. This could be delayed 60 days if necessary by Presidential action.

A DEFINITION OF A COMMUTE TRAIN was given by the ICC in an important Feb. 17 decision. It's a train that goes not over 100 miles one way and is "used by patrons traveling on a regular basis". PC's request to drop 20 trains between Providence and Boston was cut to 8, and these were defined by the ICC as commuters. The Railpax plan gave the agency the power to make such a definition.

FORMER PENN CENTRAL MANAGEMENT is again the subject of a flap, this time involving a $10 million policy purchased just after the merger of the Pennsylvania and New York Central railroads from Lloyd's of London. The policy was to protect management against possible charges of corporate wrongdoing. Now Lloyd's is suing for return of its $300,000 premium, charging that the PC gave false and misleading information in applying for the policy. It has also recently been the subject of criticism by the ICC and congressional committees.

THE SNOWFLAKE SPECIAL excursion train sponsored by Pacific Railroad Society between L.A. and Reno was unaffected by earthquake conditions. The 20-car train ran by the Coast Route to San Jose, then followed presently freight-only tracks through Oakland and over the Overland Route to Reno on the recent 4-day weekend. The San Jose-Oakland section of the run, formerly used by the Owl and other S.P. passenger trains, would be utilized in the proposed Canada-Mexico run described in the Dec. 21 issue of RTN.

TWO EUROPEAN RAIL TRAGEDIES made news. Feb. 9 a Munich-Zurich Trans-Europe Express train derailed 50 miles S.W. of Munich near Kaufbeuren. An oncoming local train then struck it, killing at least 32 and injuring 40 on the TEE train. Feb. 14 at least 34 died and 113 were hurt near Zenica in Central Yugoslavia when an electrical disorder ignited diesel fuel on a local train in Vranduk Tunnel. The 200 passengers, mostly local factory and mine workers, worked their way 300 yards to a tunnel exit. Most of the deaths were from asphyxiation.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK ***

"While enormous amounts of public funds have been poured into highways, thus subsidizing the automobile and trucking industries, the nation's mass-transit systems have been allowed to rot. New York City hangs constantly on the verge of paralysis due to traffic congestion, combined with obsolete subways and commuter railroads in such disrepair that serious breakdowns occur almost every day. Other big cities are little better off. ...

We are not, of course, going to do away with automobiles. But it is time to adopt public policies that will level off the national fleet and halt the unnecessary expansion of the highway system. It is time to program less money for new highway construction, more money for repairing worn-out roads and streets, more money for renovating the nation's railroads, and much, much more for modern mass transit in metropolitan areas."

--Audubon Magazine editorial, January 1971

"All foreign railway systems seem to be getting the green light. Here, aside from the Metroliner and the turbo train running in New England, the railways are dragging their cabooses."

--Holiday Magazine Travel Forecast 1971

"We don't know if we will join Railpax or not. But if we do go in we'll take the tax deduction instead of the stock... We've had enough experience in the passenger business to know we don't want to own a piece of it."

--Southern Pacific President B. F. Biaggini
quoted in NARP newsletter, January 1971

SLIP OF THE MONTH ***

"He (Volpe) was optimistic that the care taken in selecting routes would allow the new corporation to turn a profit within three yars and expand thereafter to meet demand."

--New York Times report on expanded Railpax network, Jan. 29

(We-uns been waitin' twenty yars for better sarvice--what's a few yars more? -Ed.)

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EDITORIALS: WHICH SAN FRANCISCO-CHICAGO ROUTE?

RTN urges Railpax planners to set the S.F. to Chicago run to follow the City of San Francisco's Overland Route to Ogden. From there, the route is already set by Volpe to follow the Zephyr routing through the Rockies to Denver and eastward.

The Overland Route across Donner Summit in the Sierras is more scenic than the Feather River Route of the former Western Pacific California Zephyr, though the latter made its run seem more attractive by all those dome cars and by widespread advertising. Donner Pass possesses the grandeur of the High Sierras--snow-covered peaks, mountain lakes--that the lower-level Feather River lacks. Besides, the route serves Reno and the popular Lake Tahoe area. Paralleling Interstate 80, bound to be overcrowded soon and always hazardous in Winter, the Hill route opens the possibility of creating a popular way to reach the Tahoe area, Squaw Valley and other Winter resorts via Truckee and reducing some of the burdensome pollution from endless autos already plaguing Tahoe. The Reno Chamber of Commerce already sponsors a regular series of "Fun Train" excursions to that city via Donner.

Running time to Ogden is about the same either way--about 19 hours according to the most recent schedules--and the starting points of the two routes in Oakland are very close together.

What we urge Railpax to do, then, is essentially preserve the present truncated "Zephyr" service, without, of course, that ridiculous change of trains in Ogden.

CANCELLING THE SAN JOAQUIN DAYLIGHT

It is no secret that the S.P. has wanted to drop the San Joaquin Daylight for some years. So surely no one could care less than they that the train is not running due to earthquake damage near L.A. If the railroad had any sense of public regard, however, it would maintain service between Bakersfield and Oakland until the full route is restored. Anyone observing the train knows that it is not just an S.F.-L.A. connection, but a very useful vehicle--almost a commute train--for numerous residents of the populous and growing San Joaquin Valley.

HOW TO KILL A PASSENGER TRAIN — No. 6 of a series

The careful rail executive desiring to turn away as many passengers as possible certainly won't overlook the power of the Yellow Pages to do so. Just as many people find what they seek quickly and conveniently there, so also many can be confused and alienated if telephone listings are properly arranged. Always list freight numbers ahead of passenger numbers. Never be clear about a passenger listing. Always be vague and confusing in wording, giving unimportant numbers ahead of major ones, and giving odd hours that phones can be reached so as to create maximum possible misunderstanding.

COMMUTING AND RAPID TRANSIT

Take the "A" Train to Oblivion

Michael Benitez of the Bronx was riding a crowded Harlem subway train early on Jan. 30 when 3 young men and a woman reportedly began harassing another rider. A Transit Authority police captain in plain clothes intervened, and a scuffle ensued that spilled out onto the platform of the 125th St. station. The captain, according to the N.Y. Times, fired several shots at the group, critically injuring two of the men. Meanwhile a Transit patrolman on duty at the station rushed to assist and fired one shot that went astray through a train window, hitting Mr. Benitez in the back of the head, killing him instantly, according to the Times.

Erie Lackawanna's New Push-Pull Commute Trains

A one-cent a gallon gasoline tax is financing $26.1 million in bonds in New Jersey to buy 105 cars and 23 engines said to be the first equipment totally designed for push-pull operation. The engine is always on the west end of the bi-directional train, pulling it from Hoboken and pushing it back. When pushing, the engineer is in a cab car at the lead end that has all the controls of the loco furnishing the power at the rear. The system eliminates switching, shorter trains being made up simply by uncoupling several rear cars in the Hoboken terminal. The fleet, when completely delivered, will include 10 bar cars serving continental breakfasts and evening refreshments; these seat 96 passengers, while 108 ride regular cars and 104 are seated in the cab cars. Pullman-Standard is supplying the cars, GE the locomotives. (Thanks to F. C. Barry, Harrington Pk.)

More on the Streetcar-Phobic Angeleno

The Malibu man who wrote to Science Magazine that he would never ride rapid transit (see RTN Dec. 21) stirred up a flurry of responses in the Jan.29 Science, including a note from an engineer at M.I.T. who pointed to the great variety of new transportation systems being developed that can substitute for polluting autos. Among them are "dual-mode" systems consisting of high-speed guideways that both privately and publicly owned vehicles can use. If these can handle up to 10,000 vehicles an hour in less space than a freeway, he predicts an eventual trend toward smaller and more personalized public transportation and the banning of conventional cars in cities.

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